

TOWN OF STOW
GLEASONDALE LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT STUDY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the January 20, 2022 Gleasondale Local Historic District Study Committee Meeting

Members present: Margaret Costello, Dorothy Spaulding, Eve Fischer, Catherine Hammill

Members absent: Jen Gero

Margaret Costello called the meeting to order at 2:00PM

Margaret Costello moved to approve the minutes of October 7th as written
Eve Fisher seconded

Roll Call Vote: Dorothy Spaulding **-Yea**; Eve Fischer **-Yea**; Catherine Hammill **-Yea**;
Margaret Costello **-Yea**

Margaret Costello moved to approve minutes of December 2nd as written
Eve Fisher seconded

Roll Call Vote: Dorothy Spaulding **-Yea**; Eve Fischer **-Yea**; Catherine Hammill **-Yea**;
Margaret Costello **-Yea**

Proposed District Boundary

The Committee discussed the latest proposed district boundary and agreed that it included all properties previously discussed.

Eve Fischer moved to approve the proposed historic district boundary
Margaret Costello seconded

Roll Call Vote: Dorothy Spaulding **-Yea**; Eve Fischer **-Yea**; Catherine Hammill **-Yea**;
Margaret Costello **-Yea**

Preliminary Study Report – Progress Update

Margaret Costello said that she had hoped the committee could draft the preliminary study report to the Mass Historical Commission themselves but is now doubtful after better understanding the full scope. Margaret Costello said that a lot of information needed is already contained in previous planning reports and historic inventory narratives. Margaret Costello suggested the Committee seek outside assistance in drafting the preliminary report.

Margaret Costello said she has an acquaintance in Hudson with experience writing grant applications and reports for town governments who could be engaged to draft the preliminary report. Margaret Costello said she hopes the committee could pay a roughly \$1,000 fee for such work. Malcolm Ragan said that the committee could request the funds at Annual Town Meeting. Eve Fischer said Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds could be applied to the work but wondered if the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) is still accepting project applications for May Town Meeting. Malcolm Ragan said staff will

investigate CPA eligibility for the preliminary study report and will assist as needed on any warrant articles requested.

Public Forum Planning – Progress Update

Eve Fischer said that she would prefer the forum be in-person, and suggested the forum be pushed back to later in the spring. Eve Fischer said she wants to have enough preparation time to answer questions from residents who may be skeptical of the need for a historic district.

Committee members discussed the need to reach out to specific residents before they bring their proposal for the district to the broader public.

Catherine Hammill said that as long as there are not burdensome regulations, a historic district can be advantageous to a neighborhood and positively affect real estate values in some cases. Committee members discussed broad intentions for a district with clear design guidelines and stronger regulations for major additions, demolitions, and new construction.

Dot Spaulding said that some residents will want to know specifics on proposed regulations before they decide whether to support a historic district.

Resident Laurel Cohen said she wants to know exactly what is proposed before she can decide to support the district. Laurel Cohen said her concern is that any new regulations would add extra layers of regulation to complicate permitting in an area already challenged with a lot of requirements. Laurel Cohen said that residents have so far done a good job of maintaining historic properties, and worried that regulating exterior features will add time and money to any developments. Eve Fischer said that such concerns are exactly the sorts of comments the group wishes to hear at the public forum.

Dot Spaulding said the committee needs to be careful to explain exactly how a local historic district works, rather than focus specifically on the areas that could be regulated. Catherine Hammill said that many residents will automatically associate a historic district with red tape, and that this committee will need to clearly communicate that they are unlikely to propose a district as stringent as those in places like Concord or Nantucket.

Eve Fischer wondered if it would be helpful to have someone who lives within a Historic District in a nearby community speak at the forum. Catherine Hammill said she has a coworker who lives in a district in Acton and can reach out to her to speak with the committee.

Dot Spaulding said that the committee should review regulations for historic districts in Hudson, Sudbury, and Acton. Eve Fischer said that the committee is specifically quite concerned about preserving the mill building, and that it will require specific attention in any design guidelines.

Laurel Cohen said the Mill is identified as a source of PFAS contaminants and has not responded to MassDEP requirements to address the issues, which has led to anger by abutters whose wells are affected. Margaret Costello suggested that her and Eve Fischer meet informally with the mill owner about his considerations for the future of the mill, and that he should continue to be engaged about the historic district efforts and PFAS concerns.

Workplan Update

Dot Spaulding said that the historic commission will consider updating the area form for Gleasondale in the MHC historic inventory to reflect the extent of the proposed historic district.

Dot Spaulding moved to adjourn
Eve Fischer seconded

Respectfully submitted,
Malcolm Ragan